



UMBC

“Teachers, I believe, are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth”

Helen Caldicott

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# UMBC TESOL Program Newsletter

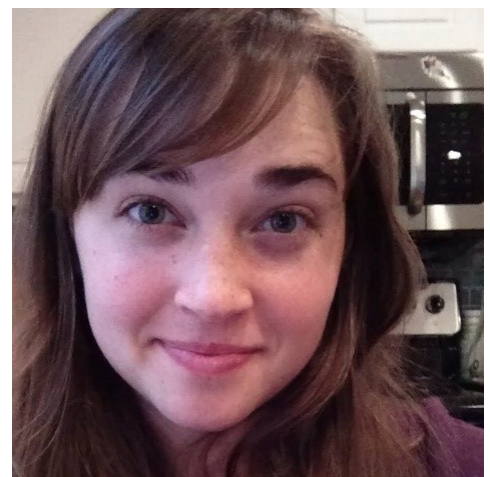
EDITED BY SARAH DROLLINGER

SPRING 2019

## Alumni Voice: Amber Hengen

B.A. Global Studies, B.A. Political Science, M.A. TESOL

As Refugee School Impact Specialist for BCCC Refugee Youth Project I work with refugee and other immigrant student populations to provide them with college readiness resources and out of school time (OST) experiential learning opportunities. RYP collaborates with a variety of stakeholders including public schools, universities (including UMBC), local and global community development organizations and volunteers to provide RYP after school programming, college tour field trips, and mentoring services. We work with youth ages k-12 in Baltimore City and surrounding areas. I also develop curriculum for our RYP summer school program, a skill gained through the MA TESOL program at UMBC. The students I work with are resilient, thoughtful and ambitious. My goal in this position is to 1) assist refugee and other



immigrant students in the Baltimore area with developing skills to be competitive college applicants, and 2) to support students' personal growth as they navigate a new country and school system. As an undergraduate alumna of UMBC I took courses with professors such as Brigid Starkey, David Hoffman and Lazlo Korossy through the BA Global Studies program. The experiences gained through these courses largely shaped the work I am doing now!

# Maryland TESOL Grad Conference 2019

## With Bridget Simmons

On March 9th, 2019, Maryland TESOL held their annual Graduate Interest Section Conference for graduate students willing to present about relevant topics in the field to attending peers. Doaa Rashed opened the conference as the keynote speaker, providing some background on the various career pathways an MA TESOL student can take once they graduate including jobs in the public school system, adult education at community colleges or nonprofits, and opportunities abroad.



Following our keynote speaker, concurrent presentation sessions were led by UMBC graduate students Jaione Diaz Mazquiaran, Felipe Kershbaum, Timothy Mallard, and Ana Granados. Mazquiaran presented her findings on the use of multiliteracies in the second language learner classroom and their effect on learners' cultural identity. Through his experience moving from adult education to elementary ESOL, Kershbaum shed some light on the advocacy and social justice issues that guided his career choices. Mallard gave a presentation on facilitating creative writing groups with students using innovative practices such as incorporating poetry and music lyrics. Lastly, Granados provided some context

on teaching Math to ESOL students at the high school level, sharing some of the strategies she currently uses and experiences she has had in her time in that position.

To close the conference, our Maryland TESOL president Luis Penton donated a couple of his favorite books on ESOL topics as well as a free voucher to the state of Maryland TESOL conference coming up this fall.

*Bridget Simmons is a MA alumni who graduated in May 2019 with K-12 certification. She also served on the MD TESOL Board*

## ESOL CLUB

This spring the ESOL club went to McFadden Art Glass in Baltimore. We enjoyed learning about glassblowing and creating our own projects.

We hope you can become involved in the ESOL Club next semester. We will be looking for input as we plan future events. Interested in planning or helping?

Contact: [esol@umbc.edu](mailto:esol@umbc.edu)



## Program Alum Peter Lomuscio: Bringing Religious Difference Into the Classroom

**“With any learner, and especially English Language Learners, it is important to put whatever is taught in context”**

Religion has always played a huge part in my life. I was raised Roman Catholic, but then as a rebellious teenager I had an “enlightening” and denounced Catholicism. Years later my mom died, and that drew me back to Catholicism. At the same time, I was working in theater, and religion was a factor in almost every play I worked on, especially Shakespeare. I began to realize the importance of religion not just for me but for everyone. I began to see religious structures in our lives. Then I began to realize that my religion was not the only one that mattered.

I joined the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies (ICJS) Teaching Fellowship because of ICJS’ passion for bringing religion back into the classroom. But at ICJS, it is not about instilling belief or a conversion. It is about celebrating our differences and the effect that can have on our young. I also joined the fellowship because I wanted to know more about everybody else. It was a means to familiarize myself with someone different from me. Then the question arose: Why is religion important in school and why should we teach it?

I am a teacher of senior English language learners at Digital Harbor High School, a grades 9–12 magnet school in Federal Hill, Baltimore. In class we were reading Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, a ‘speculative’ fiction novel set in a theocratic government. I thought about the question again: Why is religion important in school and why should we teach it? I decided theocracy was the way to answer the question.

With any learner, and especially English Language Learners, it is important to put whatever is taught in context. Putting a lesson/idea in context can help the learners make a connection to it and form a point of view. Once they have that connection and point of view, then it becomes relevant. And when it is relevant it produces meaningful discussions.

I developed a lesson on theocracy using *The Handmaid’s Tale* as an anchor. We were three quarters into the book and had had many discussions about novel’s futuristic setting of Gilead and Gilead’s theocratic government. I began with The Vatican and spoke about my own upbringing in a strict Catholic home. We discussed Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Iran. My students thought that Atwood was making all this stuff up about a theocratic state. Showing them that it is real today put theocracy in context for them. We discussed the terrors of it in the novel, but we also discussed the joy that it brings to the people who celebrate it.

I had recently been to Vatican City and shared personal pictures of this city. I was explaining to them that religion is everyone’s personal choice and everyone’s personal right. Yes, you may not agree with the way people’s lives are twisted in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, but the fact is that theocratic state has its own personal right and justification in keeping the human race in evolution. Religion in any form is not bad or wrong. It may be perceived as that because we don’t understand, appreciate, or empathize with its worshipers.

*Peter Lomuscio graduated from the M.A. TESOL program at UMBC in 2017. Since then, he has been teaching ESOL seniors at Digital Harbor High School in Baltimore City. This past year he was part of a fellowship with the aim of teaching tolerance and bringing religion back into the classroom.*

## Recognitions and Recent Events



Congratulations to **Mike Schapiro**, who is a recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship for the upcoming academic year. He will be working as an English Teaching Assistant in Colombia.

Congratulations to **Alfonso Fraile**, who has been awarded the Critical Language Scholarship. He will be heading to South Korea this summer to participate in an intensive 8-week language study.



Congratulations to **Leah Ginty**, who is a recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship for the upcoming academic year. She will be traveling to Benin to work as a teaching assistant.

Congratulations to **Jennifer Bohlman**, who has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for the upcoming academic year. She will be working as a teaching assistant in Germany.

Congratulations to **David Schmidt**, who is a recipient of an English Language Fellow Scholarship. He will be traveling to Tajikistan in September to complete his fellowship.

Congratulations to **Timothy Mallard**, who is a recipient of the Critical Language Scholarship and the HI USA Explore the World Scholarship. He will be going to Tanzania this summer.

# Spring 2019 Graduates !

## Certificate Awardees:

Kathy Bryan  
Paula Duarte  
Joanna Pecore  
Marjorie Swingle  
Felicia Verrett  
Caitlin Box  
Cara Dye  
Sara Ingersoll  
Mary Murphy  
Jennifer Stotler

## Master's Graduates:

Christina Allen  
Cierra Anoruo  
Karen Arledge  
Yaya Sekou Sala Ballo  
Jenn Bohlman  
Alfonso Fraile  
Leah Ginty  
Sarah Grippando  
Noora Mahmassani  
Keneisha Murrell  
Mike Schapiro  
David Schmidt  
Mike Serebruany  
Bridget Simmons  
Brian Souders  
Kristin Thomas  
James Ward  
Marju Casellas  
Theresa Downs  
Tina Fetty  
Allison Gross  
Emily Hernandez  
Eva Khoury

**Congratulations!**  
Please keep in  
touch with us as  
we greatly enjoy  
hearing from our  
alumni!



UMBC

### UMBC ESOL Program

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